

Irish has a rich literature in the Latin alphabet from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries. Scots Gaelic is a late offshoot of Irish brought to Scotland by Irish settlers in the sixth century A.D.; its first written records are from the fifteenth century. Manx, extinct since the mid-twentieth century, is recorded from the sixteenth century.

The Britannic (or Brythonic) branch of Celtic comprises Welsh, Cornish, and Breton. The earliest written records of Welsh date from the late eighth century A.D., those of Cornish from the tenth century. Breton was brought to Brittany in northern France in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. by immigrants from Cornwall and Wales fleeing the Germanic invaders.

Of all the surviving Indo-European language groups, Celtic is in the greatest danger of extinction today. Though there are still thousands of native speakers of Irish, Scots Gaelic, Welsh, and Breton, most of these speakers are bilingual in English or French.

Italic

Early Italy contained within its borders a wide variety of languages and dialects, most of them Indo-European, but at least one of them (Etruscan) non-Indo-European. Although Oscan and Umbrian are today categorized as Italic, along with Latin, there is some evidence that Osco-Umbrian was a completely separate Indo-European group. Both Oscan and Umbrian were once fairly important languages in Italy; we have surviving extensive inscriptions in Oscan dating back to about 400 B.C. and in Umbrian from the second century B.C.

Latin was once confined to the minor provinces of Latium south of the Tiber River, but the power of Rome spread Latin throughout the peninsula, and Latin had replaced most of the other languages there by perhaps the beginning of the Christian era. As the Roman Empire expanded throughout Europe, the legionnaires and the administrators brought their version of Latin with them. This was Vulgar Latin, the spoken language, which differed from Classical Latin in vocabulary and in its loss of inflections. Because the Romans moved into different areas of Europe at different times, they brought different varieties of Vulgar Latin with them; hence, modern French and modern Spanish do not have an identical direct ancestor.

The prestige of Classical Latin and learning delayed the recognition of the various offshoots of Vulgar Latin as respectable languages. Consequently, our earliest records of the Romance languages are all relatively late. French first appears in writing in the eighth century A.D., Italian in the tenth, Spanish and Portuguese in the eleventh, and Rumanian only in the sixteenth century. Aside from these major Romance languages today, there are also Rhaeto-Romansch in Switzerland, Sardinian, Walloon (a dialect of French) in Belgium, Canadian French, and Haitian and Papiamentu creoles.

Germanic

Germanic speakers came to the attention of history when they began to move from southern Scandinavia toward the Roman Empire. Caesar first used the term

Germani in his *Gallic Wars*; a century and a half later, Tacitus treated them in more detail in his *Germania* (A.D. 98).

Up to about the beginning of the Christian era, Germanic was probably one language with only minor dialectal differences. However, as groups migrated into various parts of Europe and became separated, dialectal differences developed rapidly. Today the Germanic languages are usually divided into East Germanic, West Germanic, and North Germanic. Although these divisions are not entirely satisfactory for encompassing the complex relationships among the various languages, they are adequate for our purposes.

All the East Germanic languages are extinct today, but we have evidence that many separate dialects—Gothic, Burgundian, Vandalic, Gepidic, Rugian, and so on—once existed. Of these, there is written evidence of only Gothic. Happily for Germanic scholars, this evidence is early and fairly extensive. About A.D. 370, Bishop Ulfilas (or Wulfila, to use the Germanic form of his name), a missionary among the Visigoths, translated most of the Bible into Gothic, even inventing a special alphabet based on Greek for his project. Large portions of his translations have been lost, but enough remains to provide detailed information about the language. Gothic was spoken and occasionally written in Italy, Spain, and France until perhaps as late as the ninth century A.D. but gradually gave way to Romance languages. The last vestiges were reported from the Crimea in the eighteenth century.

North Germanic consists of the Scandinavian languages. No extensive continuous texts appear until about the twelfth century, but briefer runic inscriptions survive from the third century A.D. on. The North Germanic languages seem to have been undifferentiated until as late as the eighth century. North Germanic today includes an eastern branch (Swedish and Danish) and a western branch (Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese). Although Icelandic today has only perhaps a quarter of a million native speakers, it has a long and glorious literary tradition, especially of prose sagas and of poetry, dating back to the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Like North Germanic, the West Germanic languages are traditionally divided into two groups, High German and Low German, on the basis of sound changes in the former. (The traditional terms High and Low refer to geography, not quality; a better terminology would be South German instead of High German and North German instead of Low German.) High German is attested—already with dialectal variants—from the eighth century onward. Contemporary representatives of High German are the varieties of German spoken in southern Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Yiddish, despite heavy influence from Hebrew and Slavic, is also a High German dialect.

Written records of Low German first appear in the seventh century in England and in the ninth century on the Continent. Modern Low German languages (or dialects) include Low German (Plattdeutsch) in Germany, Dutch, Afrikaans, Luxemburgian, Flemish (in Belgium), Frisian (in the northern part of the Netherlands), and English. Frisian and English are especially closely related, and some scholars speak of an Anglo-Frisian subgroup of Low German.

FROM INDO-EUROPEAN TO GERMANIC

As we have noted earlier, we simply do not have enough information about early Indo-European or even early stages of Germanic to speak confidently about all their details. Indeed, some of the evidence that we do have is sufficiently conflicting to suggest that neither Indo-European nor Germanic was ever a single, undifferentiated language. Hence, in the following discussion, the terms Common Indo-European (CIE) and Common Germanic (CGmc) should be interpreted only as referring to sets of common features shared by most or all of the dialects or subdivisions of CIE and CGmc. It is as if we were to describe Present-Day English by abstracting the common features of the languages used by speakers from Chicago, Dublin, Manchester, and Melbourne. We would be able to give a coherent picture of the broader aspects of English but would find conflicting evidence in the finer details. Nor can we even assign precise dates to CIE and CGmc. For the purposes of exposition, we can, somewhat arbitrarily, assume a date of 3000 B.C. for CIE and 100 B.C. for CGmc.

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Phonology

Remember that phonology is the system of speech sounds of a language, especially at a given period or in a particular area. Phonology also refers to the scientific study of these sound systems. The phonetic alphabets were created to establish a common notation of human speech sounds, regardless of the language being transcribed. (See inside covers of this book.)

Prosody and Germanic Fixed Stress **Prosody** refers to the rhythmic alternations of strongly and weakly accented syllables, that is, to the differences in stress or pitch or both between syllables. Loosely speaking, it is the pattern of accented and unaccented syllables in the flow of sound. CIE had an accent based on pitch differences. This pitch accent was “free”; that is, it could occur on any syllable (though any particular form of a given word would have the accent in the same place).

Germanic replaced the CIE pitch accent with a strong stress accent based on loudness rather than pitch. It ended up with three degrees of stress: (1) primary or major stress on the root syllable of words, (2) weak stress on following syllables, and (3) an intermediate level of secondary stress on the second element of compound words and on many prefixes. Somewhat later, Germanic fixed this stress accent on the initial syllable of the word. (A few prefixes took weak stress; then the accent was on the following syllable.) These prosodic changes have had widespread effects on all the Germanic languages. In English they affected not only the phonology but also the morphology and ultimately the syntax of the language.

Consonants and the First Sound Shift The First Germanic Sound Shift, also known as Grimm’s Law, is a set of statements describing the inherited Proto-Indo-European stops as they developed in Proto-Germanic, the common ancestor of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. CIE had

three types of consonant-stop, a single fricative /s/, and the resonants /m, n, l, r, j, w/. Most scholars today also posit anywhere from one to four laryngeal consonants, but because they are not necessary for discussing the evolution of Germanic or English, we ignore them here. There is also debate over exactly how many series of stops CIE had; again, for a description of Germanic developments, we need assume only the following consonant sounds.

	<i>Bilabial</i>	<i>Dental</i>	<i>Velar</i>	<i>Labiovelar</i>
Voiceless	p	t	k	k ^w
Voiced	b	d	g	g ^w
Voiced Aspirated	bh	dh	gh	gh ^w

The final entries in each row ([k^w] [g^w] [gh^w]) represent labiovelar stops, that is, stops with simultaneous labial and velar articulation, somewhat like the initial sounds of English *quick* and *Guatemala*.

Grimm's Law Beginning some time in the first millennium B.C. and perhaps continuing over several centuries, all the Indo-European stops underwent a complete transformation in Germanic. At the end of the complete cycle of changes, the following pattern had emerged.

<i>First Change</i>	<i>Second Change</i>	<i>Third Change</i>
<i>IE Gmc</i>	<i>IE Gmc</i>	<i>IE Gmc</i>
p > f	b > p	bh > b
t > θ	d > t	dh > d
k > x(h)	g > k	gh > g
k ^w > x ^w	g ^w > k ^w	gh ^w > g ^w

In short, all the IE voiceless stops had become voiceless fricatives, the IE voiced stops had become voiceless stops, and the IE voiced aspirated stops had become voiced stops.² (Later changes in individual Germanic languages have modified this pattern in certain environments, but we need not be concerned about these details at this point.)

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Although certain correspondences between the consonants in Germanic languages and those in other IE languages had been observed earlier, it was Jakob Grimm (of fairy-tale fame) who codified them in 1822. Therefore the change is often termed **Grimm's Law**. Table 4.1 illustrates resulting correspondences in cognate words between Germanic and Latin. The IE labiovelars such as [k^w] are omitted from the chart because their development was identical to that of the velars.

Almost as soon as Grimm's Law had been formulated, apparent exceptions began to be noticed. Many of them were soon explained as being conditioned

2. IE voiced aspirated stops first became voiced fricatives ([β] [ð] [ɣ] [ɣ^w]) before shifting to voiced stops. For the sake of simplicity, we list only the end result here.

TABLE 4.1 Grimm’s Law Illustrated

Indo-European	Latin	Germanic
p	<i>p</i> <u>e</u> <i>d</i> i <u>s</u> , <i>p</i> <u>a</u> <i>t</i> e <u>r</u>	English <i>f</i> <u>o</u> o <u>t</u> , <i>f</i> <u>a</u> <i>t</i> h <u>e</u> r
t	<i>t</i> <u>r</u> e <u>s</u> , <i>t</i> <u>o</u> n <u>a</u> r <u>e</u>	English <i>t</i> <u>h</u> r <u>e</u> e, <i>t</i> o <i>t</i> <u>h</u> u <u>n</u> d <u>e</u> r
k	<i>c</i> <u>a</u> n <u>i</u> s, <i>c</i> <u>o</u> r <u>n</u> u	English <i>h</i> <u>o</u> u <u>n</u> d, <i>h</i> <u>o</u> r <u>n</u>
b*	<i>t</i> u <u>r</u> b <u>a</u> ‘crowd’	Old English <i>t</i> h <u>o</u> r <u>p</u> ‘village’
d	<i>d</i> <u>e</u> n <u>t</u> i <u>s</u> , <i>d</i> <u>u</u> o	English <i>t</i> <u>o</u> o <u>t</u> h, <i>t</i> <u>w</u> o
g	<i>g</i> <u>r</u> a <u>n</u> u <u>m</u> , <i>a</i> g <u>e</u> r	English <i>c</i> <u>o</u> r <u>n</u> , <i>a</i> c <u>r</u> e
bh	<i>f</i> r <u>a</u> t <u>e</u> r, <i>f</i> r <u>a</u> (n)g <u>o</u> [†]	English <i>b</i> r <u>o</u> t <u>h</u> e <u>r</u> , <i>b</i> r <u>e</u> a <u>k</u>
dh	<i>f</i> o <u>r</u> i <u>s</u> , <i>f</i> i(n)g <u>o</u> [†]	English <i>d</i> o <u>o</u> r, <i>d</i> o <u>u</u> g <u>h</u>
gh	<i>h</i> o <u>r</u> t <u>u</u> s, <i>h</i> o <u>s</u> t <u>i</u> s [†]	English <i>g</i> a <u>r</u> d <u>e</u> n, <i>g</i> u <u>e</u> s <u>t</u> [‡]

*Examples of IE [b] are few; the sound was apparently very rare.
†IE voiced aspirates changed to fricatives in Latin.
‡Because Gmc [g] underwent later changes in English, we here use two loanwords in English. *Garden* is from Old French, which had borrowed it from Germanic; *guest* is from Old Norse, like English a Germanic language.

by the phonetic environment. For example, Grimm’s Law was amended to allow for the preservation of IE voiceless stops in Germanic after another voiceless stop or after [s]. Thus the following correspondences held.

After a Voiceless Stop	After [s]
Latin <i>o</i> c <u>t</u> o; OE <i>ea</i> h <u>t</u> a ‘eight’	Latin <i>s</i> p <u>u</u> o; PDE <i>s</i> p <u>i</u> t
Latin <i>c</i> a <u>p</u> t <u>o</u> ; PDE <i>h</i> a <u>f</u> f	Latin <i>s</i> t <u>e</u> ll <u>a</u> ; PDE <i>s</i> t <u>a</u> r
	Latin <i>s</i> c <u>u</u> t <u>u</u> m ‘shield’; ON <i>s</i> k <u>i</u> ð ‘ski’ ³

Verner’s Law A more puzzling set of exceptions involves seeming reversals of Grimm’s Law. Where voiceless [f], [θ], and [x] were expected to appear as corresponding fricatives to the IE stops [p], [t], and [k], the voiced stops [b], [d], and [g] sometimes appeared instead. In addition, [r] often appeared where [s] was expected. In 1877, Karl Verner was able to explain these exceptions with what is now known as **Verner’s Law**. By examining cognate words in other languages that had preserved the original IE stress, Verner showed that when the Germanic [f], [θ], and [x] (resulting from Grimm’s Law) were surrounded by voiced sounds and preceded by an unaccented vowel, they became voiced. Table 4.2 illustrates the operation of Verner’s Law by comparing forms in Germanic languages with forms in Classical languages that preserve the original Indo-European consonants; the Greek and Sanskrit forms also retain the original IE stress. In some instances, Gothic forms are used to illustrate the Germanic development because subsequent changes in Old English confuse the picture.

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3. We use the Old Norse word *s*kið to illustrate the point here because the combination [sk] underwent a further change in early Old English; English later borrowed the Norse word as *s*ki.

TABLE 4.2 Verner’s Law Illustrated

Indo-European	Classical Language	Germanic Language
p	Latin <i>caput</i> ‘head’	Gothic <i>haubīp</i>
t	Greek <i>klutós</i> ‘famous’	OE <i>hlud</i> ‘loud’
k	Greek <i>dekás</i> ‘group of ten’	Gothic <i>tigus*</i>
s	Sanskrit <i>snusá</i> ‘daughter-in-law’	OE <i>snogu</i>

*Compare Greek *déka* “ten”, Gothic *taihun*, where the original stress is on the preceding syllable. Verner’s Law does not apply, and Grimm’s Law operates as expected.

Subsequent sound changes have usually obscured the effects of Verner’s Law in PDE; one exception is the varying final consonants of *was* and *were*. However, the effects can still be seen in Old English, especially in alternations among forms of strong (irregular) verbs. The following examples are typical.

OE Present-Stem Forms	OE Past Participles
<i>seoþan</i> ‘to seethe’	– <i>soden</i> ‘sodden’
<i>leosan</i> ‘to lose’	– <i>loren</i> ‘lost’ (cf. <i>lovelorn</i>)
<i>slyhþ</i> ‘strikes’	– <i>slagen</i> ‘struck, slain’

Verner’s Law was helpful in providing a relative (though not absolute) chronology for Grimm’s Law and the fixed stress of Germanic. Because Verner’s Law resulted from a mobile (free) stress, the change must have occurred *before* Germanic fixed stress on initial syllables. On the other hand, because Verner’s Law operated on the results of Grimm’s Law, it must have occurred *after* the changes described by Grimm’s Law had already begun—after the IE voiceless stops (p, t, k, k^w) had become voiceless fricatives (f, θ, x (h), x^w). Otherwise, the resulting voiced stops would have fallen together with the original IE voiced stops. In sum, the chronology was (1) IE voiceless stops became voiceless fricatives in Germanic (Grimm’s Law); (2) under certain circumstances, Germanic voiceless fricatives became voiced stops (Verner’s Law); (3) Germanic stress was fixed on the first syllable.

The term **First Consonant Shift** is often used to refer to the effects of Grimm’s Law and Verner’s Law taken together. It is called “First” to distinguish it from a later change, the Second Consonant Shift, that affected only High German. The Second Consonant Shift is beyond the scope of our discussion here, but we might just note that it is the cause of such English–German correspondences as *penny*:*Pfennig*; *coper*:*Kupfer*; and *dead*:*tot*.

The remaining IE consonants developed less dramatically in Germanic. IE /s/, except when affected by Verner’s Law, remained unchanged. IE also had a series of resonants (/m, n, l, r, j, w/), which could serve either as consonants or vowels. In Germanic, they all remained but lost their vocalic nature. That is, they no longer could form the nucleus of a syllable but were always supported by a regular vowel.

TABLE 4.3 Grimm, Verner, and Accent Shifts

Proto-Indo-European	*bhráter	*pātér
Grimm's Law/Verner's Law	*bróðar	*faðér
Accent shift	*bróðar	*fáðer
Gothic	brōþar	fadar
Old English	brōðor	fæder

Verner's Law and Accent Shift The PIE voiceless stops (*p*, *t*, *k*) become voiceless fricatives (*f*, *θ*, *x*) in most contexts by Grimm's Law. However, when directly preceding an accented vowel, they become instead voiceless fricatives by Verner's Law, which later become stops (*b*, *d*, *g*) in many Germanic languages. After the effects of Grimm's and Verner's laws, the accent was fixed on the initial syllable in all words, obscuring the original context. See Table 4.3.

Vowels and Ablaut Compared to the drastic changes in the consonant system, the vowel system of Germanic remained relatively stable; the major changes are in the direction of simplification. Among the most important changes, IE *[a] > Gmc [ō], reducing the inventory of long vowels by one. Further, IE *[o] and *[a] coalesced in Germanic, reducing the number of short vowels. The falling together of IE *[a] and *[o] also affected the diphthongs, reducing that category. IE *[ei] simplified to Gmc [ī], giving just three diphthongs in place of the six that IE had had. Subsequent sound changes in Germanic altered the distribution of some of its original vowels. In particular, there was a general tendency for [i] to replace [e] in unstressed syllables and before nasals.

We might note that the vowels [a] and [o] have a long history of instability in Germanic languages. To this day, the various dialects of English handle them differently, and many dialects do not phonemically distinguish the PDE reflexes of these vowels, /a/ and /ɔ/; for example, in some dialects, the words *caller* and *collar* are homophones. Even within the same dialect, different speakers often have different distribution patterns.

Indo-European vowels participated in an extensive system of **ablaut** (also called **apophony** and **vowel gradation**), whereby changes in the vowels of roots indicated such morphological categories as tense, number, or even part of speech. The basic ablaut series was *e* ~ *o* ~ *ø*, in which *e* represents full grade, *o* represents secondary grade, and *ø* represents lowest, or zero, grade (that is, the vowel is lost completely). This basic pattern was varied by lengthening (*ē* ~ *ō* ~ *ə*) and by forming diphthongs with elements following the original vowels (*ei* ~ *oi* ~ *i*), leading to a number of different sets of alternations, the specific details of which need not concern us here. The particular vowel that appeared in a given form originally depended on the location of the accent in the word. (One can see the effects of shifting accent upon vowel quality in such PDE loanwords as *catastrophic* [kætəstráfik]/*catastrophe* [kætəstrəfi], where the shifting of the stress from the second to the third syllable changes every vowel of the original word.)

In Germanic, the conditioning factor (a change in accent) for ablaut was eliminated when the accent was fixed on the first syllable of all words, regardless of their grammatical form or function. Nonetheless, the vowel alternations that had appeared in CIE often remained to some extent, to the present day. They are most obvious in strong verbs like *sing*, *sang*, *sung* but also appear in related nouns from the same root (*song*).

Graphics

Since CIE was the language of a preliterate culture, we have no graphic evidence of it. Shortly after the split of Common Germanic into East, West, and North branches, the North Germanic and West Germanic groups invented a special alphabet, the *futhorc*; it is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Morphology

Morphology is the analysis of the structure of words.

Primarily on the basis of the inflections words took or did not take, four major word classes (parts of speech) are identified for IE: nouns/adjectives, pronouns, verbs, and prepositions. The adverb was not a separate word class. There was no article and no separate class of conjunctions. Nouns and adjectives are lumped together because in IE they took the same inflections; the rather sharp distinction we tend to make between PDE nouns and adjectives did not exist.

IE nouns, adjectives (including demonstratives), and pronouns were inflected for case, number, and gender. (**Case** refers to the use of separate inflections to express different grammatical functions such as subject or object.) IE probably had eight cases. See Table 4.4.

In Germanic, the ablative and locative fell together with the dative case, giving Germanic only six cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, and vocative). Although there was a strong tendency for the instrumental

TABLE 4.4

Case	Use
Nominative	used for the subject of a finite verb or for predicate nouns or adjectives
Genitive	used to indicate that a noun is the modifier of another noun and to express relationships such as possession
Dative	used to indicate the indirect object of a verb, the object of many prepositions, and the direct object of some verbs
Accusative	used to indicate the direct object of a verb as well as the object of some prepositions
Ablative	used to indicate separation or direction away from a source
Instrumental	used to express agency or means
Locative	used to indicate place in or at which
Vocative	used to indicate a person or thing being directly addressed

to fuse with the dative, West Germanic preserved the instrumental long enough for traces to survive in early Old English. The vocative also later became identical to the nominative, partly because many of its endings had already been the same as those of the nominative.

IE had three **numbers**—singular, plural, and dual (used to refer to only two of something). Germanic preserved all three of these numbers, although the dual was lost later. IE also had three **genders** (masculine, feminine, and neuter), all of which were preserved in Germanic.

In addition to this assortment of inflectional categories, IE had various classes of noun stems, and the actual form of each inflection varied according to what vowel or consonant the stem ended in. Again, Germanic tended to reduce the number of stem types.

Although its general tendency was to simplify the IE declensional system, Germanic was unique among the IE languages in complicating the adjective declension by introducing two different sets of adjective inflections, whose use was determined by whether the adjective was preceded by a demonstrative (**definite** or **weak adjectives**) or not (**indefinite** or **strong adjectives**). See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of definite and indefinite adjectives.

Indo-European pronouns had all the cases, numbers, and genders of nouns and adjectives. In addition, the personal pronouns distinguished three **persons**: first person (speaker), second person (addressee), and third person (anything else). First- and second-person pronouns did not, however, distinguish gender (nor is gender distinguished in these pronouns today).

The IE verb was even more heavily inflected than the noun. In addition to marking person and number, it also distinguished aspect, voice, and mood. **Aspect** is only roughly equivalent to what we normally mean by “tense”; it focuses more on completion, duration, or repetition of the action expressed by the verb than on time. IE verbs had six aspects: (1) **present**, referring to continuing action in progress; (2) **imperfect**, referring to continuing action in the past; (3) **aorist**, referring to momentary action in the past; (4) **perfect**, referring to completed action; (5) **pluperfect**, referring to completed action in the past; and (6) **future**, referring to actions to come. Like the Celtic and Italic languages, Germanic changed the focus of verb conjugations from aspect to tense, that is, to expressing only time relationships through inflections. Germanic also reduced the six aspect categories of IE to two tense categories, present (which included future) and past (often called **preterite**).

IE had three **voices**—**active**, **passive**, and **middle** (or reflexive). Except for Gothic, Germanic lost both the inflected passive and the inflected middle voices, expressing these notions by means of phrases rather than inflections. The five **moods** of IE were **indicative** (for statements or questions of fact), **subjunctive** (expressing will), **optative** (expressing wishes), **imperative** (expressing commands), and **injunctive** (expressing unreality). Germanic retained the indicative and parts of the imperative but subsumed both the subjunctive and the injunctive under the optative (confusingly usually called the subjunctive).

There were seven major classes of verbs in IE, distinguished by their root vowels and following consonants. Without going into details at this point, we

TABLE 4.5 Summary of Indo-European and Germanic Inflectional Categories

	Indo-European	Germanic
CASE	nominative genitive dative ablative locative instrumental accusative vocative	nominative genitive dative (instrumental)* accusative (vocative) [†]
GENDER	masculine feminine neuter	masculine feminine neuter
PERSON	first second third	first second third
NUMBER	singular dual plural	singular dual plural
MOOD	indicative subjunctive optative injunctive imperative	indicative optative (= subjunctive) imperative
VOICE	active middle passive	active
ASPECT (>TENSE)	present future imperfect perfect aorist pluperfect	present past (= preterite)

*Survived in Germanic, but had only a marginal status in Old English.

[†]Survived in Germanic, but was lost in Old English.

note simply that Germanic retained these seven basic classes. Germanic also added an entirely new category of verb, the “weak verbs” (or **dental preterite** verbs), formed from other parts of speech and characterized by past tense and past participle endings containing /t/ or /d/.

Table 4.5 summarizes these changes in morphology.

Syntax

Remember that syntax governs the rules for arranging words to form comprehensible phrases, clauses, and sentences.

With no surviving speakers or texts, we have no direct information about word order in IE, although it is usually assumed that the order of major elements in a clause was subject-object-verb (SOV), rather than PDE's normal SVO order. Because the plethora of inflections provided a great deal of information about the grammatical functions of the words in a sentence, word order was probably a great deal freer than in, say, Present-Day English. With the loss of distinctive inflections for the ablative, locative, and, to some extent, the instrumental cases, the various Germanic languages developed prepositions to express those grammatical relationships. However, this process was only just beginning at the time of Common Germanic.

Common Germanic apparently still retained a relatively free word order; at least, in the fourth century A.D., Ulphilas found it possible to translate the Greek Bible almost word for word into Gothic without readjusting the syntax. Although the resulting translation may have seemed somewhat unidiomatic to native speakers of Gothic, we must assume that it was at least comprehensible. Certainly, by A.D. 1000, when extensive portions of the Bible were translated into Old English, the translators changed the word order of the original Latin to fit what were by then more rigid English patterns.

Lexicon

Remember that a language's lexicon comprises all of its words and morphemes.

As mentioned earlier, enough of the vocabulary of CIE has survived in its descendant branches to give us a reasonably good outline of the original homeland and culture of its speakers. We have cognates for a large number of words that any human culture must have in order for its members to communicate with each other. They include kinship terms like *father* and *mother*; basic verbs like *be*, *lie*, and *eat*; terms for natural phenomena like *sun* and *tree*; adjectives such as *long* and *red*; and nouns for bodily parts such as *foot* and *head*. The various IE languages still share cognate forms for common grammatical concepts such as interrogation and negation.

Common Germanic inherited and retained a large fund of such words from CIE. For many Germanic words, we lack evidence for a common Indo-European root but find cognates in one or more of the other IE branches, especially for those geographically closest to Germanic, including Italic, Celtic, and Balto-Slavic. Common Germanic also borrowed words from these other IE branches. For example, the Germanic words for copper, ark, cheese, kettle, ass, and linen were borrowed from Latin. Words for doctor, king, and iron came from Celtic. (The borrowing was not all one-way; these other branches also borrowed extensively from Germanic. For example, the various words for "blue" in the Romance languages come from Germanic.)

Besides its inherited vocabulary from CIE and its loanwords from other IE languages, Germanic languages are distinguished by a large common vocabulary *not* shared by other IE languages. Present-Day English still preserves scores of these words, including—and this is only a small sample—*back*, *bless*, *blood*, *body*, *bone*, *bride*, *broad*, *child*, *dear*, *earl*, *eel*, *game*, *gate*, *ground*, *oar*, *rat*, *rise*, *sea*, *soul*, *theft*,

and womb. Most scholars assume that this large, uniquely Germanic vocabulary was borrowed from non-Indo-European speakers whom the Germanic speakers encountered and probably assimilated at an early stage in their migration from the original IE homeland. We have, however, no evidence whatsoever for what this substratum language may have been or what it was like.

No living language relies solely on borrowings for creating new vocabulary items. Common Germanic already used derivative affixes such as **-iskaz* (PDE *-ish*) to form nouns and adjectives indicating nationality. It also had inherited the process of compounding from CIE, although the kind of compounding most characteristic of Germanic languages today was a later development in the individual languages.

Semantics

Recall that semantics is the study of the meanings of words.

Because we have no examples of either Indo-European or Germanic in context, no surviving texts, it is difficult to say much about types of semantic changes between CIE and CGmc. In a few cases, all surviving words from one IE root show a meaning different in Germanic from that in other IE languages, and here we can sometimes see not only the shift in meaning but also the logic of the shift. For example, from the IE root **wespero-* ‘evening, night,’ Latin has *vesper* ‘evening,’ and Greek has *hesperos* ‘evening.’ In Germanic, the root survives in the form **west* (English *west*, German *Westen*, Swedish *väst*, etc.). Clearly, the change in reference is from the time when the sun sets to the place where the sun sets. In the case of the IE root **gembh-* ‘tooth, nail,’ Gmc **kambaz* ‘comb’ reflects a change in meaning from biological bonelike structures to an object resembling such structures, a shift caused by analogy.

A Comparison of Germanic Languages

W 4.8

As we have noted, there are no texts of Common Germanic, and the earliest surviving texts in any Germanic language are in Gothic, perhaps five hundred years after the breakup of Common Germanic. For North Germanic, the earliest texts are brief futhorc inscriptions. Of the West Germanic languages, English has the first texts, but the earliest of these dates only from the early seventh century A.D. Nonetheless, the relationships among the Germanic languages are obvious even a millennium after the breakup.

Reproduced below is the text of the Lord’s Prayer in the WGmc Old English (c. A.D. 1000), the NGmc Old Norse (after A.D. 1000), and the EGmc Gothic (c. A.D. 350). For comparative purposes, the Latin Vulgate and a PDE translation are also given. The Gothic is a translation from the Greek New Testament; the Old English and the Old Norse are translations from the Latin Vulgate (itself a translation from the Greek). Cognate words among two or all three of the Germanic languages are underscored; because Latin is also an IE language, a number of the Latin words are predictably also cognate with the Germanic words, but they are not underlined.

OE Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum, si þin nama gehalgod.
 ON Faðer várr sá þú ert í hifne, helgesk nafn þitt.
 Gothic Atta unsar þu in himinam, weihnai namo þein.
 Vulg. Pater noster qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum.
 PDE Our father who is in heaven, may your name be made holy.

OE Tobecume þin rice. Gewurpe ðin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.
 ON Til kome þitt ríke. Verðe þinn vile, suá á iorþ sem á hifne.
 Gothic Qimai þiudinassu þeins. Wairþai wilja þeins, swe in himina jah ana airþai.
 Vulg. Adveniat regnum tuum. Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra.
 PDE May your kingdom come. May your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

OE Urne dæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg.
 ON Gef oss í dag várt dagligt brauþ.
 Gothic Hlaif unsarana þana sinteinan gif uns himma daga.
 Vulg. Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie.
 PDE Give us today our daily bread.

OE And forgyf us ure gyltas swa swa we
 ON Ok fyrerlát oss ossar skulder suá sem vér
 Gothic Jah aflet uns þatei skulans sijaima, swaswe jah weis
 Vulg. Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos
 PDE And forgive our debts, just as we

OE forgyfað urum gyltendum.
 ON fyrerlátom ossom skuldo-nautom.
 Gothic afletam þam skulam unsaraim.
 Vulg. dimittimus debitoribus nostris.
 PDE forgive our debtors.

OE And ne gelæd þu us on costnunge, ac alys us of yfele.
 ON Ok inn leiþ oss eige í freistne, heldr frels þú oss af illo.
 Gothic Jah ni briggars uns in fraistubnjai ak lausei uns af þamma ubilin.
 Vulg. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo.
 PDE And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Differing spelling conventions in the three Germanic languages conceal some of the similarities or identities among them. For example, Gothic *ei* = [I]; if it were respelled with *i*, the relationship of Gothic *þein* with ON *þitt* would be clearer. Similarly, Gothic *q* = [kw]; respelling *Qimai* as *kwimai* would make its parallel to ON *kome* more obvious.

In some instances, cognate words were available in two or all three of the Germanic languages but simply were not used—like all languages, the earlier Germanic languages were relatively rich in synonyms. For example, in line 4, the OE text has *forgyf* “forgive” where ON and Gothic have *fyrerlát* and *aſlet*, respectively. The OE translator could just as well have used *forlæt* here; it also meant “forgive.” In line 6, where OE has *costnunge*, the translator could have used *frasung* instead, cognate with Gothic *fraistubnjai* and ON *freistne*. In the same line, where OE has *gelæd*, OE *bring* (cognate with Gothic *briggais*) would have been possible.

The progressing rigidity of syntax of the Germanic languages is evident in the difference between the early Gothic and the later OE. Whereas the Gothic almost always follows the Greek (and the Latin) word order exactly, ON and OE alter it frequently. For example, except for the first two words in the text,⁴ the possessive pronouns in ON and OE precede the words they modify, even though they normally follow them in the Latin text. (In line 2, compare Vulg. *Adveniat regnum tuum* “come kingdom thy” with OE *tobecume þin rice* “come thy kingdom.”)

The Germanic loss of the rich IE system of verbal inflections is evident in line 1, where the meaning calls for an optative present passive verb. To express this notion, Gothic uses a subjunctive present (*weiðnai*). Old English has a verb phrase consisting of the present subjunctive of the verb “to be” (*si*) and a past participle (*gehalgod*). Old Norse employs a reflexive form of the verb (*helgesk*).

Different as they may appear at first glance, these texts reveal clearly the unity of the Germanic languages as opposed to the non-Germanic Latin.

ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

To summarize, the six most important changes that distinguish Germanic languages from other Indo-European languages are

- Fixed stress accent on the root syllable of words.
- Grimm’s and Verner’s laws (First Consonant Shift).
- “Strong” versus “weak” adjective declensions.
- “Weak” verbs with past tense in /t/ or /d/ (dental preterite).

4. The inversion of noun and possessive pronoun in the opening words is due to the fact that they constitute a vocative (direct address); Old English has such inversions elsewhere with direct address. For example, in the poem *Beowulf*, Wulfgar addresses Hroðgar as *þeoden min*, literally “lord my.”

- Two-tense verbal system.
- Large common vocabulary not shared by other IE languages.

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